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<b>ISSUE:</b>	<b>Proposed Redesign of Commute Trip Reduction Program</b>
<b>URGENCY:</b>	Medium
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<b>PURPOSE:</b>	Information

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**Background.** The legislature passed the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law in 1991. The goals of the program are to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and petroleum consumption through employer-based programs that decrease the number of commute trips made by people driving alone.

The CTR law affects any county in the state with a population over 150,000. Employers in those ten counties must participate if they have 100 or more full-time employees at a single worksite who begin their scheduled workday between 6 and 9 a.m. for at least 12 continuous months. Today about 500,000 commuters at more than 1,100 worksites participate in the program.

The CTR Task Force, a governor-appointed body of state agencies, affected employers, cities, counties, transit agencies, and private citizens, provides policy oversight and guidance for CTR. The CTR law dissolves the Task Force on July 1, 2006. The CTR Task Force reports biennially to the legislature and in December 2005 must recommend whether the program should be continued, modified, or terminated. Earlier this year the Task Force established a program redesign committee to review previous research, program data, and examples of best practices.

On September 23, 2005, the Task Force approved a draft legislative proposal based on the committee's recommendations and submitted the proposal to the governor. The Task Force is currently engaged in public outreach in order to finalize the proposal.

**Summary of Recommendations.** The Task Force recommends that the state continue the CTR program and implement changes to make it more targeted, more effective, more flexible, more aligned with state transportation investment in highways, and more closely tied to the Growth Management Act (GMA). Recommendations include:

- Focus the program on urban growth areas in the most congested areas of the state and allow jurisdictions to opt-in to the program if they meet Task Force criteria.
- Ask the 2006 legislature to study possible transportation demand management programs for schools.
- Introduce regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) into the program's planning framework to enhance regional coordination and consistency with GMA.
- Enable local jurisdictions and RTPOs to designate growth and transportation efficiency centers where more aggressive trip reduction programs are pursued. Certified centers would be eligible for additional funding.
- Increase the efficiency of the program by reducing administrative costs.
- Establish a more effective leadership role and accountability for state agencies through stronger reporting requirements and worksite programs.
- Streamline and reconstitute the CTR Task Force into the CTR Board, adding RTPO representatives. The Board would advise WSDOT on rules for the program (in WAC).

After changes are made in law, there will be a period of rules development by the CTR Board and regional planning by RTPOs. The rules development process will closely involve CTR-affected jurisdictions, RTPOs, transits, and employers.

**Constituencies.** Implementing the Task Force recommendations will cause Whatcom and Yakima Counties to become unaffected by the CTR program. Whatcom County has indicated that it would voluntarily opt into the program; Yakima County is waiting to see how the proposal moves forward before offering comment.

The recommendations build on previous work, including a 2004 Cocker Fennessy interview survey of transportation leaders and opinion makers, feedback from CTR-implementing jurisdictions, and recommendations from the CTR Task Force to the legislature in past biennia. The discussion and results of each redesign committee and Task Force meeting have been shared with a broad audience of interested parties. RTPOs, cities and counties, and transit agencies have voiced general support for the direction of the redesign.

**Issues.** The proposal needs further refinement to address some of the following issues:

- *Centers funding.* The intent is for initial savings gained from the base program changes to be applied to certified centers as start-up funds. Eventually, the goal is for certified growth and transportation efficiency centers to receive state match funds, rank higher in grant programs, and be prioritized in federal, state, and regional funding allocations. The centers program is a voluntary program that relies on incentives, rather than penalties, so that the program may be attractive to jurisdictions if it matches local priorities.
- *Planning funding.* RTPOs will need a one-time allocation of planning funds in order to work with local jurisdictions to develop a regional CTR plan and designate centers.
- *Local autonomy.* Several jurisdictions have expressed concern that adding RTPOs to the process will take away their autonomy to develop a CTR program that makes the most sense for their city or county. The goal is for RTPOs to be involved in planning and regional coordination, not for RTPOs to make all local programs the same.
- *Rules.* The redesign shifts some parts of the current statute, such as deadlines and plan requirements, into rules to be developed by WSDOT, working with the CTR Board. The legislature may want to put program goals in the statute rather than leave it to the rules and planning process.

**Current Status.** The Task Force is working to finalize its recommendations and has developed a draft legislative proposal for the 2006 session. It is working with the Governor's office to refine the proposal and intends to pursue the governor's request designation for the draft bill.

WSDOT and the CTR Task Force are engaged in a public outreach process in October and November to hear feedback, make refinements and gain consensus among affected employers, cities and counties, RTPOs, school districts, state agencies, and others. By December 1, 2005, the CTR Task Force will submit a report to the legislature that will include an evaluation of the current program results and the data supporting the redesign recommendations.